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Article

## De-Colonising Planning Education? Exploring the Geographies of Urban Planning Education Networks

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### Abstract

Urban planning as a networked field of governance can be an essential contributor for de-colonising planning education and shaping pathways to urban equality. Educating planners with the capabilities to address complex socio-economic, environmental and political processes that drive inequality requires critical engagement with multiple knowledges and urban praxes in their learning processes. However, previous research on cities of the global South has identified severe quantitative deficits, outdated pedagogies, and qualitative shortfalls in current planning education. Moreover, the political economy and pedagogic practices adopted in higher education programmes often reproduce Western-centric political imaginations of planning, which in turn reproduce urban inequality. Many educational institutions across the global South, for example, continue teaching colonial agendas and fail to recognise everyday planning practices in the way cities are built and managed. This article contributes to a better understanding of the relation between planning education and urban inequalities by critically exploring the distribution of regional and global higher education networks and their role in de-colonising planning. The analysis is based on a literature review, quantitative and qualitative data from planning and planning education networks, as well as interviews with key players within them. The article scrutinises the geography of these networks to bring to the fore issues of language, colonial legacies and the dominance of capital cities, which, among others, currently work against more plural epistemologies and praxes. Based on a better understanding of the networked field of urban planning in higher education and ongoing efforts to open up new political imaginations and methodologies, the article suggests emerging room for manoeuvre to foster planner's capabilities to shape urban equality at scale.

### Keywords

de-colonising planning; global South; higher education; urban equality; urban planning education

### Issue

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### 1. Introduction

Realising the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11—‘Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’ (United Nations [UN], 2015)—demands urban planners with the capabilities to address complex socio-economic, environmental and political processes. Addressing inequalities is a central task

of planning, which is confronted by the “simultaneous challenges of deconstructing the diagnoses from which it departs, and identifying strategies to transform urban injustices” (Allen, Lambert, & Yap, 2018, p. 365). In working towards more just and equal cities, planners need to be equipped with the skills, capacities and values to put the world's growing urban population at the centre of their actions. This, in turn, requires an education based

on critical pedagogy, which in its content considers issues of gender, intersectionality and justice, and in its methods stimulates critical thinking and reflective practice (Tasan-Kok, 2016).

This article aims to contribute to efforts advocating a radical re-framing, transforming and de-colonising of current planning education in two closely related regards: One is the expansion of conceptualising and practicing urban planning as a networked field of governance rather than a single profession or discipline. Particularly in the context of cities of the global South, professional planners are only one part of a wide network of urban practitioners, who are collectively and individually, formally and informally, building and shaping cities. Regarding the second, to accommodate this understanding of a wide range of urban practitioners, we need to stimulate urban planning education (UPE) within and beyond the higher education sector. This aligns closely with SDG 4—'Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all' (UN, 2015)—which advocates broadening up the understanding of a wide range of education forms. Therefore, this article understands UPE as inclusive of, but not limited to, higher education and sees the building of capacities, skills and values of a range of urban practitioners as fundamental drivers of urban equality.

Despite momentum for change being created by the SDGs as well as the New Urban Agenda, research on inequalities has widely shown that UPE paradoxically remains itself as one of the drivers producing and reproducing urban inequality (MacDonald et al., 2014). This manifests in inequalities in UPE itself, as well as through the teaching of inadequate planning approaches (Allen, Revi et al., 2018). In other words, de-colonising planning involves both addressing inequalities within the political economy of higher education institutions in UPE, and the blind spots reinforced through outdated colonial curricula that renders 'formal' planning as the main process responsible for building cities across the global South, while ignoring the role and struggles of 'informal' city-makers.

Previous investigations on cities of the global South have identified several shortfalls in current planning education, which call for re-inventing and transforming it. Distributive inequalities and large quantitative deficits in the availability of, and access to, planning education have been frequently highlighted. For example, a report by the Asian Development Bank stated that by 2015 India had only an estimated 5,000 registered planners, which suggests a severe shortage of professional capacity considering that the census 2011 identified 377 million people living in about 8000 urban centers (Revi et al., 2012). Acknowledging current shortfalls and estimated rates of urbanisation in India, the Committee of Experts in Town Planning and Architecture for Policy on Education estimated a demand for educating 8,000 planners a year over the next 20 years (South Asia Urban Knowledge Hub, 2015). To this quantitative challenge come praxeological

shortfalls and epistemological inequalities, which manifest in the teaching of planning as development control with a largely technical and modernistic focus that fails to consider the wider political economy and ecology of contemporary urban change (Tasan-Kok, 2016). In many parts of the world, planning curricula continue teaching colonial approaches, while failing to recognise everyday planning practices in the way cities are built and managed (Kunzmann, 2015; Mehta, 2015; Odendaal, 2012). Bhan (2019), for example, critiques that many planning and urbanism curricula do not reflect the actual conditions under which Indian cities are built and lived. Instead, universities focus on transmitting knowledge about simplistic tools and solutions for urban challenges, rather than building the capacity of urban practitioners to work with the messy modes of repair or auto-construction, which are essential to Southern urban practices.

In this article, we seek to deepen the understanding of the relations between UPE and urban inequality, following a three-dimensional conceptualisation of urban justice and equality which has been developed by Fraser (1998, 2005) and adopted for higher education by Walker and Unterhalter (2007). The first dimension concerns distributive equality, which has been the most dominant, resourcist approach to measuring, for example, access to education, number of graduates or student-teacher ratios across different social categories. Taken alone, this approach proclaims that learners can appropriate equally distributed resources in the same way. Hence, emphasis on distributive equality often overlooks the contextual factors that shape the learning outcomes of different individuals and groups. Therefore, it is paramount to complement calls for re-distribution together with those for reciprocal recognition, thus, scrutinising the ways in which planning education either challenges or reinforces politics of difference. The third dimension, parity of participation, is essential for opening up the political space for learners to activate their agency and utilise their capacities. This requires working towards an equality of capabilities, whereby addressing power relations is fundamental to entitle learners to access education and implement their learning into reflective action with a justice-oriented intent (Walker, 2006).

The following sections will take the higher education sector and distributional inequality as entry points to better understand levers and barriers for re-framing current planning education. Aligned with the notion of planning as a networked field of governance, which demands radical change at scale, we focus on the role of planning education networks, which are umbrella associations that link different schools in the field. The analysis is based on a literature review and online repositories of national, regional and global planning education and professional planner's associations.

Secondary data from these networks, which includes the names and location of members, membership requirements and categories, were used to develop a se-

ries of maps, which, in turn, served as an input for interrogating issues of urban inequalities in 19 semi-structured interviews. These were held between November 2018 and March 2019 with planning educators from Latin America (2), Asia (7) and Africa (4) as well as UK and US-based ones (6) with several decades of experience working in the global South. All interviewees have or had positions in higher education institutions; several hold positions in the boards of planning education associations and have affiliations with international NGOs and civil society organisations.

A critical reading of maps involves examining not just the geographical distribution of UPE but also the broader context of what and who is being recognised and made visible and in what ways (Lambert & Allen, 2017). In other words, the reasons and implications of absences and presences in planning education networks are highly contextual and are therefore best interpreted through consideration of the historical, political, socio-economic, and cultural conditions that shape UPE in specific geographies.

## 2. Networks in Higher Education and Urban Planning

Previous research has found several motivations for the emergence of planning education networks, which include forging connections between and across previously disparate schools, establishing a professional profile, and signalling key historical junctures in the development of planning as a networked field of governance (Freestone, Goodman, & Burton, 2018; Kunzmann, 1999). The decision for forming the Association of African Planning Schools (AAPS), for example, was strongly influenced by the idea of re-connecting planning schools across the region in a post-apartheid and post-colonial context (Watson & Odendaal, 2013). Moreover, the initiative recognised the shared institutional, legal, and pedagogic challenges faced by many African cities and the urgent need to collaboratively develop curricula and pedagogies to equip learners with the capacities to address such challenges (Odendaal, 2012). In Europe and North America, connecting planning schools in a regional network has been seen as a required step also for shaping and sharpening the profile of a distinct and recognised profession that stands vis-à-vis the professions it emerged from, particularly architecture and engineering (Frank et al., 2014). An example for establishing networks as markers for turning points in planning practice is the case of the Indonesian Planning School Association (ASPI). Indonesia started the national network in 2001 in an era of democratisation and decentralisation. Strongly influenced by German development assistance GTZ, ASPI's foundation has also been justified as a replication of a model that has been seen perceived as successful in several Western countries (Setiawan, 2018).

The benefits of connecting with other members and regional and global networks are manifold, as they have the potential to increase resources, recognition, visibil-

ity and build alliances. Resources include funding for projects and activities and publications, databases and other sources of information. For example, in 2009, the AAPS implemented a project called 'Revitalizing Planning Education in Africa' with funding from the Rockefeller Foundation. The project produced, amongst other outputs, a post-graduate curriculum frame, which was co-developed at an AAPS meeting in Dar es Salaam in 2010 (Odendaal & Watson, 2018). With support from the AAPS, this framework has been contextually appropriated and formally established as an MSc in Spatial Planning at the University of Zambia in Lusaka. Considering that only one other available planning degree exists in Zambia, which is moreover based on an outdated curriculum, this MSc has been an essential step towards equipping urban practitioners with skills and capacities to address the country's identified urban challenges, through innovative pedagogies that bridge practice and theory (Interview 2, 31 January 2019).

Moreover, the AAPS network was essential to make the experience from Lusaka visible and amplify the knowledge about this case, which provided opportunities for learning in other cities and universities (Interview 1, 9 January 2019). Associations are critical in facilitating translocal knowledge exchange, either across cases and schools facing similar urban planning issues and/or through the exposure to new and unfamiliar situations. These can take the form of visiting scholarships, collaborative workshops, and professional training courses. Further, regular conferences provide critical moments for networking among members and for sharing and discussing knowledge with a wide audience (Galland & Elinbaum, 2018). Regional and global conferences such as the World Planning School Congresses, along with related publications, including the book series *Dialogues in Urban and Regional Planning* and the *Journal of Planning Education and Research* and special issues like the *diSP Planning Review 2018*, have been essential mechanisms to gain visibility and recognition within the network and the wider (academic) field of planning.

In the following section, we read the absence and presence of planning education associations and their members as a proxy indicator for the potential benefits outlined in this section, which have multiple implications for the de-colonisation agenda and for building the capabilities of urban practitioners to address urban equality. However, the focus on potential benefits does not mean that we see networks of urban learning and practice uncritically. We assume that these networks are fundamental to achieve change at scale based on experiences from urban poor federations like Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI), or grassroots activist networks like the Habitat International Coalition, which have a rich history and tradition of learning the city. For example, SDI's horizontal learning exchanges represent an important methodology for members to learn about each other's programmes and processes. Moreover, sharing knowledge across the network also allowed for strength-

ening political advocacy activities and changing relations between the state and civil society organisations through making visible alternative, counterhegemonic models for issues such as housing and service provision (Bradlow, 2015). However, previous research has already identified that these tactics of collaborating with dominant urban actors might potentially put these networks at risk of replicating, rather than radically contesting, existing rationalities of governmentality (Roy, 2009). Complementary to those tensions and opportunities in grassroots networks, we see a need for interrogating more conventional networks of UPE to scope their potential benefits for planners to learn within these networks as well as across them.

### 3. Reading the Geography of UPE Associations

Several reports commissioned by, for example, the Commonwealth Association of Planners (CAP), UN-Habitat and different regional planning education associations, have so far aimed at benchmarking the distribution of UPE at the regional and global scale and in relation to network memberships. A global study by UN-Habitat (2009) argues that the major challenge for UPE does not lie in absolute numbers of planning students, graduates and schools, but in the maldistribution of planning schools across and within different regions. Of the 550 identified planning schools worldwide in 2009, 320 were located in 10 countries. The report further identified that 53% of these planning schools were located in the global North; an imbalance which becomes significant when considering that these countries only host 20% of the world's population (UN-Habitat, 2009). In terms of networks in many countries of the global South, some authors critique low regional network membership coupled with the substantial number of schools that do not operate under an accreditation system, arguing that academic staff therefore work in relative isolation, with limited ability to share curricula and pedagogic practices (Stiftel, 2009; UN-Habitat, 2009).

We have updated these reports' baseline information on planning schools in the higher education sector and their geographical distribution based on associations websites. We used openly accessible data about memberships in the Global Planning Education Association Network (GPEAN) as a departing point to investigate implications for urban equality. GPEAN emerged after the first World Planning Schools Congress 2001 in Shanghai, China. It was formed by several regional planning school associations, which recognised the need for a global umbrella organisation that brings together national as well as (cross-)regional planning schools. GPEAN comprises the following associations:

- Association of African Planning Schools (AAPS; 57 member schools, 18 countries). AAPS was founded in 1999 as a voluntary peer-to-peer network of tertiary education institutions across Africa.

- Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP; 132 members, 5 countries). ACSP was established in 1969 with a clear mandate to shape pedagogic theory and practice for planning professionals.
- Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP; 160 member schools, 39 countries). AESOP emerged 1987, motivated to create a forum of exchange similar to the previously established ACSP.
- Australian and New Zealand Association of Planning Schools (ANZAPS; 25 member schools, 2 countries). ANZAPS represents planning schools and educators; its main activities are annual conferences, which have been organised since 1994.
- International Association for the Promotion of Learning and Research of Urban Planning (APERAU; 35 member schools, 6 countries). APERAU was founded in 1984 with an explicit multidisciplinary discourse on planning.
- Asian Planning Schools Association (APSA; 52 member schools, 14 countries). APSA focuses on the particularly Asian planning education challenges and organises major regional congresses since 1991.
- Association of Latin American Schools of Urbanism and Planning (ALEUP; 15 members, 4 countries). ALEUP was founded in 1999 as regional platform which supports the legitimisation of undergraduate degrees in urbanism and planning.
- Association of Canadian University Planning Program (ACUPP; 18 members, 1 country). ACUPP started in 1977, focusing on the relations between planning education, research and practice.
- National Association of Postgraduate Studies and Research in Urban and Regional Planning (ANPUR; 78 members, 1 country). ANPUR has rapidly expanded in Brazil since its foundation in 1983 and brings together schools in regional and urban planning.
- Association of Schools of Planning in Indonesia (ASPI; 59 members, 1 country). ASPI was established in 2000 with a particularly explicit agenda to align planning education with the goal of welfare production in the Indonesian society.
- Association of Planning Schools of Turkey (TUPOB; 19 members, 1 country). As a national organisation, TUPOB was founded in 2004 by Heads of Planning Schools and the Chamber of City Planners, in response to demands for quality assurance in education as well as professional qualifications.

As of October 2018, we identified 650 higher education institutions, who are members of the GPEAN in 80 countries. 389 are organisations based in the global North (Australia, Canada, Europe, New Zealand and US), while 261 are located in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin



America. These schools are part of different higher education institutions (including polytechnics), and include fields such as urban planning, regional planning, urbanism and development. Their distribution is mapped in Figure 1.

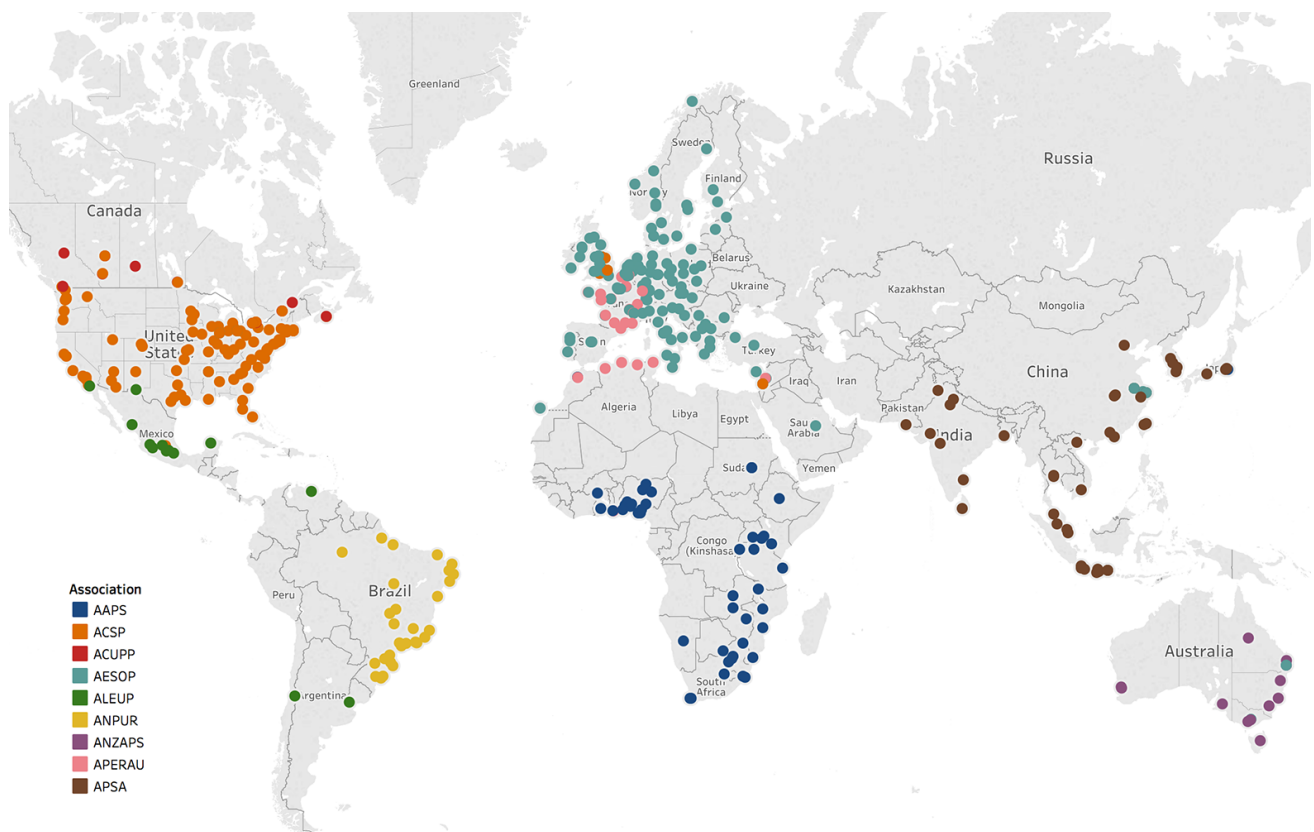
An interrogation of the global distribution of GPEAN members reveals five main issues, which host explanatory power for the distribution of member schools and implications for distributive, recognitional and participatory equality. They are: geographic density and gaps; capital cities; language; post-colonial networks; and alternative networks including other (higher) education networks and professional planner's organisations.

### 3.1. Geographic Density and Gaps

Figure 1 indicates that national and regional planning education associations have relatively and absolutely more members in the global North and BRICS countries (excluding Russia). However, there are some countries in the global South, which seem exceptionally well-represented. This applies to Indonesia (59 members), as well as Nigeria (9 members of the AAPPS) and small states covered by the Commonwealth (St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, Belize, and Brunei). On the other hand, the map also highlights large gaps in associations in Russia, the Middle East, North-West and Central Africa as well

as Eastern Europe. The latter gap has been acknowledged by the European association AESOP, which specifically targeted to recruit schools from countries such as Ukraine, Latvia, and Russia. However, these efforts had only limited success, identifying costs and language as major barriers to membership acquisition and to obtaining the expected benefits (Frank et al., 2014). Other requirements for becoming a member—such as having national accreditation as a planning education school—can also become hindrances for certain schools, disciplines or degree levels.

There are several cautions to reading the geographic distribution of this map in isolation. These include that membership is voluntary, hence, does not reflect the entirety of schools in any region. Further, as will be explored below, alternative networks might exist which provide similar benefits to planning schools. Finally, it is important to emphasise that the distribution of members does not indicate the scale and scope of activities of the network. Even if structures are in place, networking and collaborative research activities are strongly shaped by funding resources to support, for example, travel exchanges and communication infrastructure. An interviewee from the Brazilian association ANPUR, for example, highlighted how the current national government abolished the Ministry of Cities and cut funding for universities. This implies that this might in turn re-focus network



**Figure 1.** Location of the members of the GPEAN. Note that TUPOB and ASPI are not included in this map for reasons of legibility. Source: Authors.

members to align activities stronger with social movements rather than government authorities (Interview 4, 11 February 2019).

### 3.2. Capital Cities

Most member organisations are located in urban centres, although many schools are also responsible for regional and rural planning. The map shows higher concentrations of associations in coastal cities, which coincide with large urban areas and ports. This is particularly obvious in Brazil, but also in cities such as Lagos (Nigeria), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Cape Town (South Africa), Karachi (Pakistan), Accra (Ghana) and Sydney (Australia).

Out of the 650 GPEAN members, about one-sixth (102) are located in capital cities, while 23 countries do not have any member planning schools outside of their capitals. This can either be attributed to highly centralised planning systems, or explained by the fact that many countries face an overall high quantitative deficit of planning schools with only one member-school in the country (e.g., Uganda, Ethiopia). There are only few exceptions, such as Bangladesh and Malawi, where member organisations are respectively based in Khulna and Blantyre rather than in their capital cities. However, highlighted by an interviewee from Mexico, particularly in decentralised countries of Latin America, planning schools may have started from the capital city but are now more distributed across the country (Interview 8, 28 January 2019). In Mexico, this is reflected in their approach to 'territorial' (rather than urban) and human settlements planning.

### 3.3. Language

Strong examples of the importance of language as a barrier or boundary to networking across a region are manifest in Latin America through the division between ALEUP (Spanish-speaking) and ANPUR (Portuguese-speaking). Similarly, only five of the 57 member-schools of the AAPS are located in countries that are not *de jure* anglophone. These are two universities in Mozambique, one in Togo, one in Morocco and one in Ethiopia (albeit the latter can be considered *de facto* anglophone).

APERAU is the only network explicitly positioning itself as francophone network of urban planning, urbanism and urban development. It links members across Europe and North Africa and Canada and forms part and receives funding from the wider network of francophone universities (L'Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie).

At the global level, however, English remains the dominant language, which is manifested, among others, in network conferences as well as academic publications. In the context of Latin America, Galland and Elinbaum (2018, p. 51) note that some academics carry "a (well-founded) prejudice against the top-indexed Anglo-Saxon journals that arguably attempt to impose their problems and methods on southern countries." The authors see

Spanish journals such as *Colombia's Bitácora*, *Cuadernos de Geografía* and *Cuadernos de Vivienda y Urbanismo* and Chile's *EURE* and *Revista INVI* as fundamental to develop alternative knowledge dissemination structures (Galland & Elinbaum, 2018). Further, many members deliver planning education in English while planning practice takes place in local languages. In India, local planning practice and academic research have to be transmitted between English and the country's 21 other official languages (Kunzmann, 2015).

### 3.4. Post-Colonial Networks

Evidently, questions of language cannot be seen detached from strong colonial influences on UPE, which take on different shapes in a post-colonial context. For example, of the 109 members in regional Asian and African Associations (AAPS and APSA), more than half (62) belong to nations of the Commonwealth; of a total 135 members of APSA, AAPS and AESOP (outside Europe and the UK), 84 are former British colonies or protectorates.

In the case of Commonwealth nations, this has several implications for linking planning education and planning professionals. The CAP, which represents about 40,000 planners in 27 countries, commissioned a report to review capacity building and planning education across the different regions of the Commonwealth (Levy, Mattingly, & Wakely, 2011). In regard to distributive equality, this study found an overall quantitative deficit and severe mismatches between the locations of schools and locations experiencing rapid urban demographic growth and urbanisation of poverty. Further, the report welcomes the increasing formation of regional and international networks; however, it sees scope for improvement particularly in regard to strengthening the capacities of cross-continental, global networks. This strengthening of cross-regional networks and the simultaneous critical interrogation of colonial legacies becomes particularly crucial considering the continued dominance of Western curricula.

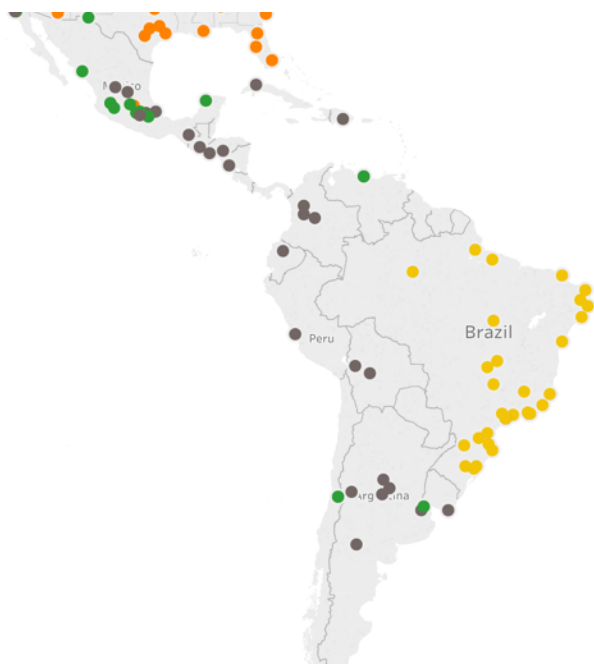
### 3.5. Alternative Networks

Levy et al. (2011) also highlight the importance of considering the different ways in which 'urban planning' is conceptualised in each region. These can, for example, reflect colonial planning concepts, such as the dominance of 'territorial development' and 'urbanism' in the Latin American and French traditions. One interviewee, who has been mostly working in Africa and Asia, reflected comparatively on the manifestation of colonial legacies in Latin America:

For me, what was always interesting about the Latin American context is that it was free of the British colonial history that was the huge imprint on the planning that I worked with in Africa and Asia. And at the same time, planning was very late in the Latin American con-

text where you had any kind of legal framing of planning as an activity...whereas in African and Asian cities this statutory basis for planning was part of a colonial heritage. So it created a completely different dynamic and also therefore a different planning education that emerged. And I suppose the first time I really came to know about a notion called urbanism was through the Latin American experience, because they had to create a term that could reflect their world that wasn't a planning world. (Interview P1, 21 November 2018)

When looking at the distribution of planning networks it is therefore important to ask which institutions are identified in a particular regional context as planning schools, and consequently, which might see benefits in affiliating themselves with certain networks. In Latin America, the Brazilian network ANPUR has strong representation across the country, bringing together about 70 post-graduate programmes in disciplines such as geography and economics, urban and regional planning (Interview 4, 11 February 2019). Comparatively smaller seems the regional network ALEUP, which only represents 15 members in four countries. However, there is an alternative regional network, which is not part of GPEAN: the Network of Postgraduate Studies from the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO). This network offers 101 Master and Doctoral degrees across 60 institutions in 17 Latin American countries (plus Spain and Portugal) in disciplines related to urbanism and territorial development (see Figure 2). It fulfils similar functions to the GPEAN members, such as organising regional conferences and providing space for knowledge exchange about urban planning pedagogies.



**Figure 2.** Members of the Latin American networks ANPUR (yellow), ALEUP (green) and CLACSO (grey). Source: Authors.

While these functions do not necessarily explain CLACSO's absence in GPEAN, an analysis of alternative networks shows that gaps in the map of regional GPEAN associations can have several reasons and implications.

Similar to CLACSO, alternative networks have a prominent role in larger nations such as China. China has only eight members in APSA, which hardly represents the hundreds of planning programmes in different cities that are implemented in engineering, architecture and geography departments. In the Chinese context, planning education has become increasingly demanded and well-regarded particularly since the early 2000s due to the boom of the urban economy and increased search for urban competitiveness (Hou, 2018). Rather than becoming part of global networks, Chinese planning education organisations seem to focus their networking on two other levels. On the one hand, strong bilateral relationships between Chinese and anglophone universities in the global North are emerging, which are manifested, for example, in the joint venture of the Xi'an Jiatong–Liverpool University. On the other hand, national-level networks are particularly strong between planning education and professional practice, which is evident in the close collaboration between academic curricula, the government's visions of urban planning, and its role for the market and industry (Hou, 2018).

Finally, it is also important to consider digital networks as alternatives, which allow for interactions and collaborations of urban practitioners and pedagogues. The web-based SDG academy, for example, provides access to a wide range of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), which are taught by academic faculty as well as NGOs, CSOs and government officials. Moreover, the potential of MOOCs and digital tools to target populations, which do not form part of localised networks, has been increasingly explored. For example, recent work by Kennedy and Laurillard (2019) shows the challenges and opportunities for co-designing digital technologies to provide teacher professional education in the context of mass displacement. The large scale and wide reach of these technologies as well as their ability to accommodate localized context as well as generic principles, have implications for re-dressing especially the unequal distribution of access to education.

#### 4. Networking (Higher) Education Institutions

Investigating the members of GPEAN shows that UPE is delivered across a range of academic disciplines. While planning has institutionally established itself in some contexts in the form of departments or faculties, many members are hosted in geography, engineering, architecture, environmental studies, urban studies, law, development studies, public policy, political science, economics, sociology, anthropology, and other social sciences. In Brazil, for example, urban planning is to a large extent taught in postgraduate degrees, as undergraduate students demand to study a 'recognised profession' in



order to find employment, especially in the public sector. Hence, students often prefer the above-mentioned disciplines for their first degrees, and opt for urban planning as a postgraduate specialisation (Interview 4, 11 March 2019). The multitude of pathways to urban practice has challenged many planning schools in their aims to form and strengthen a succinct profession at a national, regional and global scale (Kunzmann, 1999). Nevertheless, many academics welcome the diversity and flexibility of planning education approaches reflecting the contextually specific challenges and institutional structures they emerge from (Bertolini et al., 2012; Davoudi & Pendlebury, 2010). Essentially, this aligns with long-standing calls for planning to identify its core in a more dynamic way which does not wait for planning to be redefined every decade (Sandercock, 1999).

#### 4.1. Professional Accreditation

The difficulties in grasping the professional identity of planners and planning education due to its variety of disciplines and formats, are frequently discussed in reference to the accreditation of planning schools and professional planners. The implications for equality are ambiguous: On the one hand, international accreditation systems have been critiqued for operating as gate keepers that are not sufficiently contextualised and tend to replicate Western ideas of planning, which, moreover, risk duplicating or side-lining existing national accreditation processes. On the other hand, contextualised accreditation has been lauded for providing quality assurance and accountability, for facilitating access to government funding and resources and for enabling knowledge exchange and collaborations within networks of professional planners and schools (March, Hurlimann, & Robins, 2013; UN-Habitat, 2009). However, there is a delicate balance to achieve, as national accreditation bodies are also feared to control and limit explorations and creativity in planning education, while lack of international accreditation might leave schools unable to demonstrate their quality and transferability of degrees (Levy et al., 2011).

The Institute of Town Planners, India, is an example for nationally contextualised accreditation. It recognises formal degrees as well as work-study programmes, which reflect the reality of on-the-job education and professional training as an important mode of learning in the country. The work-study programmes imply that people working in certified planning offices need to follow a programme of self-study and proof a certain amount of years of work experience in order to become professionally certified. Levy et al. (2011) also mentioned the UK Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) as example for the increasing internationalisation of accreditations. RTPI is currently internationally accrediting degrees at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the University of Cape Town and the University of Botswana. While the RTPI points out that it does not prescribe and impose

curricula on these institutions (personal communication, 1 April 2019), it is nevertheless critical to ask what benefits and caveats international accreditation brings to such diverse contexts.

To tease out issues of accreditation and their assumed relations with the recognition, resources and visibility of planning schools, we contrasted the GPEAN map with those of planning education organisations identified by the International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP). The following map includes 564 planning education organisations based on the ISOCARP database which was compiled by the University of Oregon (see Figure 3). The registered organisations came to the attention of the database managers and provided them with simple, basic information such as websites, key contact details and affiliation with professional and educational bodies, which includes GPEAN regional associations. Hence, institutions registered under ISOCARP do not go through any formal accreditation processes, therefore including a wider range of universities as well as a small number of educational institutions outside higher education.

The comprehensiveness and validity of the ISOCARP data has to be viewed with caution; however, it is notable that 212 of the 564 educational institutions, which have been part of the database by October 2018 did not register any affiliation with one or more of the regional planning education associations of the previous GPEAN map. What this suggests is, firstly, that reframing planning education for urban equality at scale requires an engagement with educational institutions beyond those formally accredited or recognised by regional and global networks. Secondly, that the ISOCARP network might indicate the motivation of institutions to affiliate themselves with cross-regional, global networks (and their potential benefits mentioned before) while they are somehow hindered by membership to GPEAN networks. Third, compared to the GPEAN map, it is noteworthy that the ISOCARP map seems geographically wider distributed, as it fills some of the gaps in Eastern Europe, Latin America and South Asia that became apparent in Figure 1. However, although accreditation and gaining recognition might play a role in the ability to network, geographical gaps in parts of Asia, the Middle East, and North-West Africa in Figure 3 indicate that neither does ISOCARP capture the full body of organisations actively engaged in UPE across the world.

#### 4.2. Bridging Professional and Educational Associations

What remains obscured in Figures 1 and 3 is the (lack of) articulation of networks between higher education and other forms of education, as well as between higher education, professional and insurgent planning practices.

For example, the two aforementioned maps do not acknowledge strong ongoing engagements between universities and networks of grassroots organisations, such as collaborations between the AAPS, SDI



**Figure 3.** Distribution of 564 self-registered educational planning institutions. Source: Authors, based on the ISOCARP database.

and Women in Informal Development—Globalizing and Organizing through case and field-study based pedagogies (Odendaal & Watson, 2018). The specific rules and mechanisms of these engagements vary widely, with some collaborations facilitating frequent studio-based workshops over the period of a term while others conduct intense, week-long, sometimes international field-work and knowledge exchanges.

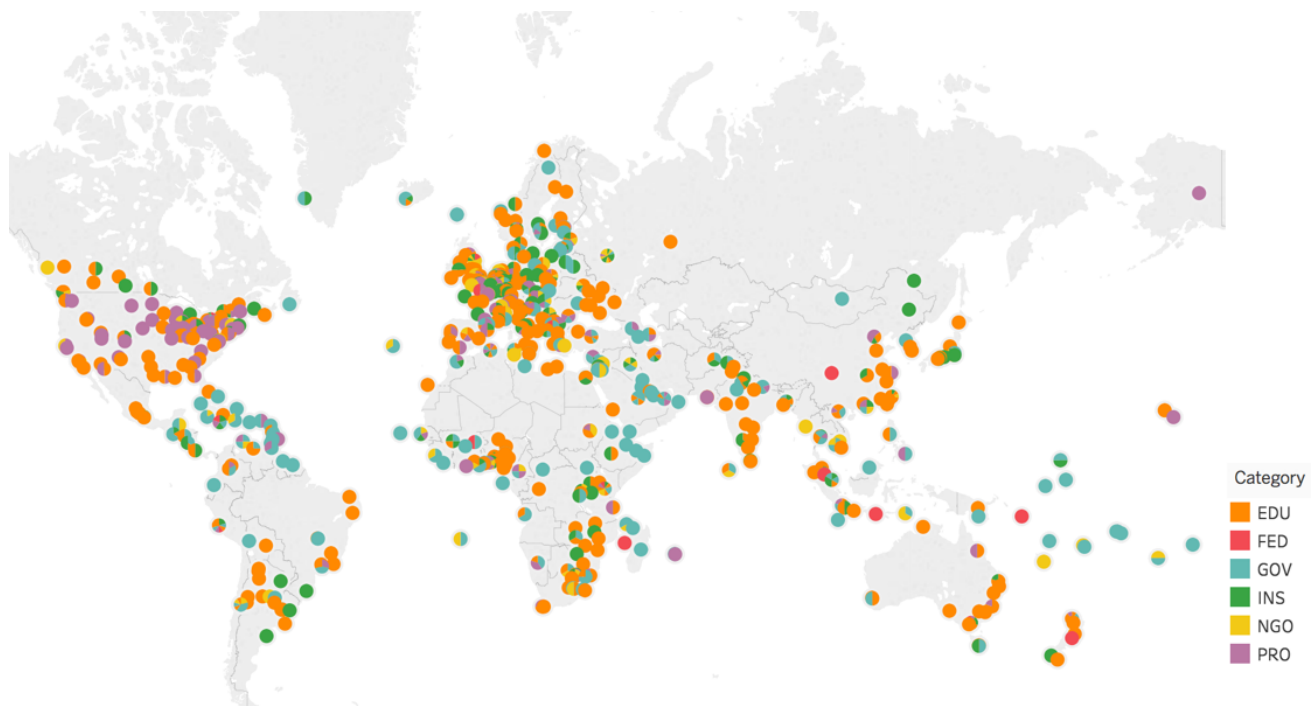
Overall, these kinds of collaborations reflect an increase in co-learning approaches of academics, students, civil society and grassroots-based organisations, which have been lauded for their potential learning outcomes to provide planning students with more grounded capacities and sensibilities to address urban inequalities (Allen, Lambert, & Yap, 2018). As such, co-learning falls within a long-ongoing shift from traditional education that unidirectionally sees to ‘fill’ students with professional skills and competences, towards a form of learning—which Sandercock (1999) called already 20 years ago—as technical, analytical, inter-cultural, ecological and design literacies. Pedagogies for building these literacies often engage with practices of insurgent planning and claim invented spaces of participation (Miraftab, 2016; Porter et al., 2017). They thereby contribute to disrupting the normalised order of planning and destabilising implicit hierarchies of knowledge between the wide range of urban practitioners and planning professionals. However, it can be argued that these pedagogic efforts are still not applied at the scale required to challenge urban inequalities. One interviewee, who set up a module with community leaders doing a lot of core teaching, highlighted

the importance of support from her (senior) colleagues and the department. However, she also stated that this may still be exceptional and that a take-up of similar courses may be limited as many academics still fall short in imagining alternative learning cultures and gaining support to pursue such pedagogic visions (Interview 6, 18 February 2019).

Beyond these collaborations, many civil-society and grassroots networks are themselves critical actors and learning networks outside of higher education. However, their pedagogic approaches and potential for re-framing UPE remain largely unrecognised in the global planning education field.

Furthermore, there is a need for further investigating the links and interactions between professional and educational associations. For example, one interviewee, who is a practitioner in the US with vast experience in international planning education, remarked that throughout his career, he often found limited room to discuss what being a reflective practitioner means in mainstream planning conferences. While the interviewee acknowledged an increasing ‘flow’ from theory to practice, i.e., more practitioners receiving theory-informed higher education qualifications, he critiques that this flow remains largely uni-directional, with little practice-based theorising finding its way into education and planning curricula (Interview 5, 14 February 2019).

To start investigating the disjuncture between educational and practitioner networks, we mapped the geographical distribution of the ISOCARP database, which is covering professional and educational organisations, as



**Figure 4.** Distribution of EDUcational institutions, FEDerations, GOVernment agencies, INStitutes, NGOs and PROfessional organisations. Source: Authors based on ISOCARP.

it includes in total more than 1800 planning agencies, associations, institutes, government ministries, NGOs and universities. Figure 4 is particularly interesting as it shows planning organisations in many countries which are not covered by previous maps, such as Mongolia, Yemen, Senegal, and many Pacific and Caribbean islands. Further, one-coloured circles highlight that in many countries only one type of planning organisation exists, implying locations where educational and practice institutions do not overlap. It requires further research to reveal potential reasons and implications for urban equality in these countries, such as exploring links to the increasing mobility and the translocal flows of learning across cities and institutions, i.e., where planners learn in contexts that are different to the ones they practice in.

## 5. Conclusion

The article aimed to contribute to decolonising and re-framing UPE through an examination of the multiple geographies in which this wide field of thinking, learning and practice operates. We provided an analysis of the geographies of planning education networks through mapping and interviews, thereby raising multiple interrelated issues like geographical density and gaps, language, colonial legacies, gaps between academia and planning practice, and the role of professional accreditation in either hindering or advancing planning approaches that talk to context-specific urban equality challenges.

What are the implications of the various geographies of the analysed global networks through which UPE

manifests itself? What do the biases and omissions, absences and presences in the distribution of these maps tell us about UPE and its required re-invention to become an effective driver of justice? Returning to the tri-dimensional conceptualisation of urban equality advocated at the beginning of this article, the conclusion highlights two challenges that might help steering further analyses and practice.

The first relates to the reciprocal recognition of the different actors in, and modes of, planning education. Higher education networks, for their benefits to members as well as their rapidly growing scale and reach, reveal potential to re-invent UPE at scale. However, analysing their geographical gaps shows that they can also reinforce rather than contest inequalities, especially in relation to membership barriers like accreditation standards and language differences between and within networks. These, among other factors, tend to reproduce certain centres of gravity and hegemonic relations within existing networks and constrain the recognition of the many modes and sites of learning within and beyond higher education. We identified several alternative networks as well as links between higher education and other (networked) urban practitioner organisations that are increasingly reshaping the landscape of UPE in collaborations with civil society organisations (as in the case of SDI and the AAPS). What seems to be missing is a better recognition of the practices of alternative educational networks and their implications for urban equality. This includes exploring their articulation with formal higher education associations, and their actual and potential im-

pact in de-colonising urban planning through a more inclusive mobilisation of ideas and practices that challenge the notion of planning as a single discipline.

Second, working towards equality of capabilities and using the notion of planning as a networked field of governance demands careful consideration of the power relations between member schools, affiliated and collaborating organisations, funders and other actors shaping UPE within the examined regional and global networks. These relations have so far been captured in research around increasing mobility and internationalisation of planning and higher education. An examination of issues like international accreditation and coloniality showed that there is an additional challenge in transforming UPE through UPE networks to work towards an equal recognition of capabilities. This implies avoiding the subordination of 'situated' learning processes and practices in specific localities to the often-presumed scalar authority and legitimacy of an increasingly global planning industry.

To sum up, more than ever in the past, we currently witness the emergence of UPE as a polycentric and networked field, with significant concerted efforts to transform the current shortcomings of planning to work towards SDG 11. But while distributive deficits have by far received more attention, it is worth noticing that what is required is not just an expanded geography for professional planning to be taught and accredited. More fundamentally, achieving transformations call for variegated re-inventions of planning to flourish across the global South and to be recognised with equal voice in forging critical epistemologies, pedagogies and practices. Planning education networks can play a key role in this endeavour but their scope for transformative change depends of whether they privilege the rescuing of a discipline producing professionals with certain competences, or to nurture the development of de-colonising knowledges and praxes to equip urban practitioners with the capabilities and sensibilities required to address urban inequality, both in its situated manifestations and structural drivers.

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### Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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